

WATERFRONT

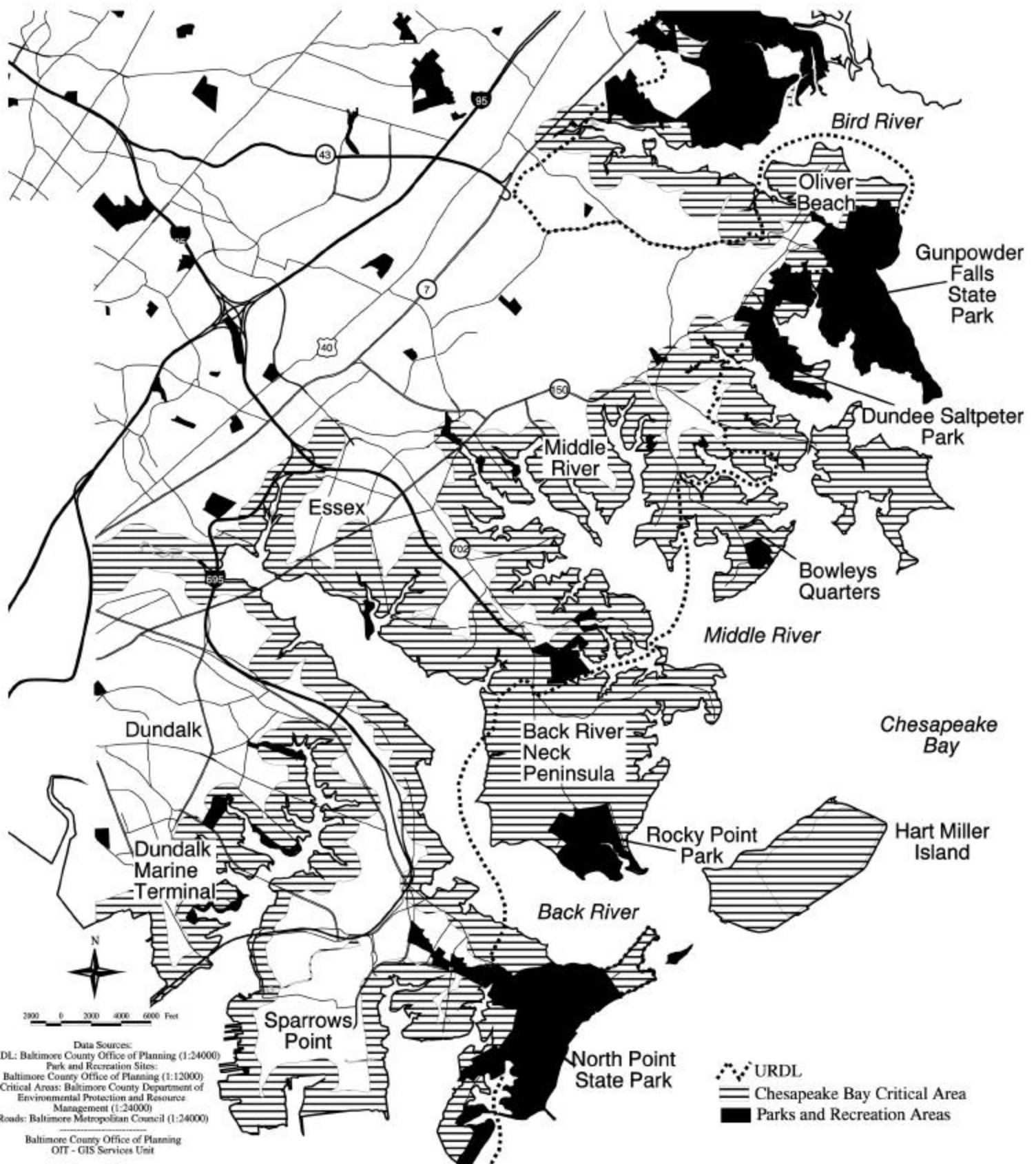
INTRODUCTION



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The waterfront is one of Baltimore County's extraordinary natural resources. Along large segments of the county's 173-mile shoreline are urban areas consisting of densely developed residential areas of bungalows and townhouses, and industrial areas of manufacturing plants and port facilities, including truck yards, boat yards and marinas. In addition to these urban developments, the waterfront also has many miles of protected shoreline, bordered by public parkland, pristine woodlands with ample wildlife, low-density residential communities and pockets of agriculture. The URDL meanders along the shore, delineating the urban development from the rural (Map 32). As a general rule, the areas that are at the lower ends of the peninsulas are more rural in character while the upper ends are more heavily developed. The Bethlehem Steel mill at the lower end of the Sparrows Point peninsula is a clear exception.

Maintaining water quality is a high priority for waterfront residents, businesses and visitors. Baltimore County has established a strong, comprehensive water quality program. It includes initiatives to convert and



**Map 32
Waterfront**



retrofit stormwater management systems, dredge streams, restore waterways, stabilize the shoreline, and develop and implement comprehensive watershed plans. In addition, the Chesapeake Bay Critical Areas law helps to protect water quality and sensitive waterfront areas by regulating development within 1000 feet of tidal water. The county, as part of the State of Maryland's commitment to save the Chesapeake Bay from further environmental degradation, enforces this legislation.

Sensitive undeveloped areas are also protected through resource conservation zoning, through additional environmental regulations, and by maintaining the URDL. Zoning densities have been reduced in some waterfront residential neighborhoods to ensure that infill development is compatible with the existing waterfront character. Efforts to preserve valuable natural resources along the waterfront include Baltimore County's successful application for state Smart Growth funds to establish a waterfront "rural legacy" area. The funds, granted in 1998, will be used to purchase land or easements for preservation.

The *Eastern Baltimore County Revitalization Strategy* (adopted as a master plan amendment in 1996) defines a vision for the waterfront areas that includes conserving and enhancing the existing waterfront communities while attracting some new upscale housing development; creating economic opportunities, including tourism; and enhancing public access to the water. This vision requires a balancing of the use of the waterfront as a natural amenity, a recreational resource, a source of economic opportunity, and a place where people live. Programs have been initiated by the Department of Economic Development to enhance the economic development and redevelopment of this area in conjunction with DEPRM's initiatives to monitor dredging and meet Chesapeake Bay Critical Area objectives.



Residential development on undersized infill lots is a concern because of the added density and potential effect on water quality.

Many of the permanent homes along the water were originally built as summer cottages on 50-foot wide lots. The addition of new housing on larger sites improves the diversity of the housing stock and helps to revitalize the waterfront communities. The addition of new housing could be accomplished through the consolidation and redevelopment of lots in existing neighborhoods or, where feasible, through the development of larger lot subdivisions. Although sites available for new development are limited, the Chesapeake Bay Critical Areas regulations include a mechanism called "growth allocation" that allows for density increases on a limited amount of

Chesapeake Bay Critical Areas land. To implement growth allocation, Baltimore County has established a committee consisting of representatives from various county departments to evaluate petitions for site design excellence and environmental sensitivity.



As an important tourism resource, Baltimore County's waterfront presents exciting opportunities for recreation, leisure activities, and economic development. Strategies for stimulating waterfront tourism include upgrading the appearance and image of the waterfront; enhancing and promoting public parks and other waterfront destinations; encouraging the development of interesting new recreational and commercial waterfront destinations; establishing links among waterfront destinations; and enhancing land and water access to the waterfront.

POLICIES

- Continue to implement a comprehensive water quality program, including citizen education.
- Limit growth and control density along the waterfront.
- Maintain land use and development standards essential for the protection of the Chesapeake Bay's biological integrity.
- Make creative use of opportunities for recreation, tourism, and rural legacy.
- Ensure that any surplus sewerage capacity that may exist is not used to support unplanned growth.
- Enhance the image of the waterfront.
- Preserve the unique rural character of the waterfront residential communities, and improve the quality of new development and redevelopment.
- Make the waterways accessible to citizens for leisure activities.
- Facilitate the redevelopment of underused industrial properties to support the Port of Baltimore.

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ISSUES AND ACTIONS

Issue: Improving Water Quality

Improving water quality is the key to the current and future enjoyment of the waterfront.



Actions

1. Steer redevelopment efforts along the waterfront into buffer management areas designated in the county's *Chesapeake Bay Critical Area Buffer Management Plan* in order to maximize water quality protection.
2. Broaden the shoreline stabilization program to include smaller, privately owned properties.
3. Develop an aggressive public education campaign to inform and promote behaviors that will improve water quality.
4. Establish and maintain cooperative relationships with other jurisdictions to protect shared watersheds.
5. Evaluate and monitor private septic systems; make loans or grants to encourage replacement as needed.

Issue: Extending Public Sewer

Sewer extensions planned for the lower peninsulas to relieve public health problems can also be expected to indirectly improve the water quality of adjacent water bodies and the Chesapeake Bay. However, they may have the unintended consequence of stimulating growth.

Action

Public sewer extensions should focus on serving lots with existing dwellings or businesses where extensions are needed to relieve a health hazard, and neighboring vested lots that otherwise satisfy county development and building criteria, as well as new development approved through the Chesapeake Bay Critical Area growth allocation process.

Issue: Protecting Natural Resource Areas

Waterfront growth pressures will continue to threaten sensitive natural features in the lower peninsula areas.

Actions

1. Maintain the URDL; ensure that rural portions of the peninsulas remain rural in character and density.
2. Designate the agricultural areas along Bird River as agricultural preservation areas in order to increase opportunities for protection of vegetable farms through easements.
3. Implement the rural legacy plan for the waterfront.



The county will maintain the URDL to ensure that rural portions of the peninsulas remain rural in character and density.

Issue: Improving the Image of the Waterfront Area

The image of the Baltimore County waterfront should be improved in order to encourage tourism, economic investment and high quality redevelopment of housing and businesses.



Actions

1. Selectively assess potential development densities and their impacts, making appropriate adjustments to the zoning map.
2. Create tools and incentives for lot consolidation and redevelopment.
3. Enforce property codes aggressively.
4. Review all growth allocation proposals for consistency with the *Eastern Baltimore County Revitalization Strategy*. Continue to use the growth allocation process to encourage well-designed development projects.
5. Identify and enhance gateways to the waterfront; upgrade the appearance of sites with high visibility.
6. Consider establishing special design standards for development in waterfront areas.
7. Take advantage of opportunities to upgrade marinas and other waterfront uses in designated buffer management areas.

Issue: Enhancing Waterfront Parks

Waterfront parks attract visitors to the area, stimulate interest in water-related activities, contribute to enjoyment and quality of life, and generate spillover economic benefits for the waterfront communities.

The county has recently undertaken a number of new waterfront park projects. The Dundee and Saltpeter Creeks Park is currently under construction and will feature an environmental center with related interpretative facilities such as trails and overlooks. The county is continuing to discuss with the State Department of Natural Resources the possible provision of other recreational activities in the Dundee-Saltpeter area. A large parcel of land has been recently purchased in Chase to serve as the Eastern Regional Park. Open space opportunities are being explored in Chesapeake Village and Tidewater Village. The county is also continuing its development of Southwest Area Park, which will provide boating facilities. The county should continue to provide high-quality waterfront public parks and related programs that accommodate a variety of recreational and leisure activities. The waterways should be made more accessible, and the use of waterfront parks encouraged.



The environmental center at Dundee and Saltpeter Creeks Park is one of the new waterfront facilities recently constructed by the county.



Actions

1. Maintain and upgrade the county's existing waterfront parks.
2. Evaluate park sites for water accessibility, including boat ramps and day piers.
3. Continue to develop the nature center and related facilities at Dundee-Salt peter Park.
4. Continue implementing the "Enterprise Parks Program" to provide expanded and diversified recreational opportunities for a nominal fee.
5. Expand efforts to promote the use of waterfront parks.
6. Pursue collaborative efforts between community businesses and the county in program development and marketing.

Issue: Providing Public Boat Ramps

In some areas, there may be a shortage of public boat ramps, as well as barriers to their use, such as difficult access or inadequate parking. Working with the community, the county should determine whether there is a need for additional boat ramps and, if so, identify appropriate locations for them. Sites should: 1) offer good land access, avoiding narrow residential streets; 2) provide sufficient parking; 3) allow for adequate buffers from residential lots; and 4) have minimal impact on environmentally sensitive areas.

Actions

1. Assess the need for additional ramps and identify appropriate locations; consider non-traditional locations including waterfront public schools and waterfront sites in industrial areas.
2. Consider keeping some facilities with ramps open longer hours or design gates through which patrons can leave but not enter after certain hours.
3. Identify, and remedy to the extent possible, the barriers limiting the use of existing public boat ramps.
4. Work with neighborhoods affected by existing community ramps to resolve issues such as ramp ownership, maintenance, and security.

Issue: Improving Access to the Waterfront

Seasonal vehicle traffic related to waterfront activities creates congestion, which discourages visitors to the waterfront and can create nuisances to communities. Visitors should be able to reach waterfront public and commercial destinations easily by automobile.

The county will assess the need for additional boat ramps in appropriate locations.

Actions

1. Extend MD Route 43 (White Marsh Boulevard) to Eastern Avenue in order to help relieve traffic backups on the peninsulas.
2. Continue to support the state's plan to improve "Haul Road" to North Point State Park for visitor access.
3. Study problem intersections; mitigate with appropriate traffic management techniques.
4. Implement a waterfront directional sign program to help visitors find the best route to waterfront destinations.



Issue: Providing Special Destinations

Special destinations attract visitors who contribute to the local economy. The county should promote and facilitate the development of waterfront destinations that offer commercial and recreational amenities. Travel is a part of the tourism experience that can be enjoyable. Opportunities should be available to travel from one destination to another. Multiple destinations combined with interesting modes of travel can enhance an area's appeal to visitors. Linking destinations thematically can further increase the attraction.

Actions

1. Study the development of a commercial waterfront destination located on surplus property owned by Lockheed-Martin at Dark Head Creek.
2. Investigate possible locations for smaller destinations; assist owners/developers with practical strategies to develop these sites.
3. Study the creation of a water shuttle system to transport visitors to historic sites, and provide links to inland historic sites, such as the Todd House on the North Point Peninsula.
4. Develop day use piers at waterfront parks to allow the parks to be reached by boaters; consider using breakwaters or other devices to make day use piers useable where water is rough.
5. Develop tours to link area destinations with a common theme, such as a military history tour of Fort Howard, Fort Carroll, Fort Armistead, Fort McHenry, and Federal Hill.



The historic Fort Howard military site is one of many potential destinations that could enhance the waterfront's appeal to visitors.

Issue: Promoting Tourism

Wider use and enjoyment of Baltimore County's waterfront can lead to increased investment in the area which, in turn, will help to stimulate the area's economy. The county should market and promote the waterfront to encourage tourism.



Actions

1. Develop strategies and materials to promote waterfront parks, facilities, activities, and special events.
2. Pursue collaborative, private/public efforts to market the economic development potential of the area.

Issue: Improving the Port

The Port of Baltimore, to function effectively, requires tracts of land near the water that can be used to store cargo, transfer cargo to other conveyances, or otherwise support the shipping industry. Underused or abandoned tracts of industrial land exist within close proximity to the waterfront. Some of these tracts could be redeveloped for port-related purposes.

Actions

1. Promote and coordinate the redevelopment of industrial land in the waterfront area for port-related uses.
2. Participate in multi-jurisdictional efforts to create uniform zoning regulations within the port area.
3. Ensure that such industrial redevelopment does not create negative impacts with respect to water quality, recreation, or the quality of life of waterfront residents.
4. Continue to participate in the Port Land Use Development Advisory Council to help compile a multi-jurisdictional maritime master plan and to promote regional development of the port resource.